PS
1919
.H33

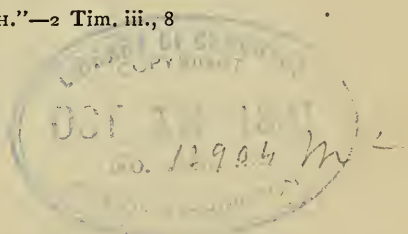
MOSES RESISTED

A POEM, IN TWELVE CANTOS

BY

W. T. HELMS

"NOW AS JANNES AND JAMBRES WITHSTOOD MOSES, SO DO THESE ALSO RESIST THE TRUTH: MEN OF CORRUPT MINDS, REPROBATE CONCERNING THE FAITH."—2 Tim. iii., 8



NASHVILLE, TENN
PRESS OF HAYNES & CAMP
1881

PS 1919
.H33

THE AUTHOR'S LETTER-PRESS EDITION.

ENTERED ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS, IN THE YEAR 1881, BY W. T. HELMS, IN THE OFFICE OF THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS AT WASHINGTON.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

Prefatory, ... 5

Invocation, ... 9

Canto 1.—Introductory View of Egypt, . . . 13

Canto 2.—A Colloquy between Two Hebrews at the Tomb of Joseph—(an Episode), ... 23

Canto 3.—Aaron and Miriam, ... 33

Canto 4.—The Journey to the Mount of God—Moses and Aaron, 43

Canto 5.—The Return to Egypt, ... 53

Canto 6.—The Assembly of the Elders and Address of Aaron, 63

Canto 7.—Moses, Aaron, and the Elders of Israel before Pharaoh, 73

Canto 8.—The Visit of Moses and Aaron to the Laboring Israelites, 83

Canto 9.—The Miracle of the Rod Turned to a Serpent—First Conflict between Moses and the Magicians, . 93

Canto 10.—The Plague of Blood—Second Conflict between Moses and the Magicians, ... 103

Canto 11.—The Plague of Frogs—Third Conflict between Moses and the Magicians, ... 113

Canto 12.—The Plague of Lice—Fourth Conflict between Moses and the Magicians, and Triumph of the Man of God—Conclusion, ... 123

PREFATORY.

I.

ONE NIGHT, about the ides of March, I dreamed,
And in my dream stood in a field, it seemed,
Beneath some lofty trees that overhead
Spread wide their limbs. A friend beside me said:
"Tread cautiously in this mysterious field,
For serpents lie among the rocks concealed."

II.

"Indeed!" said I; "why, then, are they not slain?
Why, in such grounds, permitted to remain?"
"The mistress of this field," he made reply,
"Does them with food and shelter here supply;
They are her favorites, and know her call,
A fancy strange, and most unnatural."

III.

"Strange fancy, truly," I repeating said,
"That to the serpent must her soul degrade;"
Then, looking up, amazed, I counted three
Lodged in the branches of the tallest tree;
Each serpent coiled about a sep'rate limb,
So high, I saw them with a vision dim.

IV.

I stooped and picked some pebbles from the ground,
And hurled these at them, but, alas! I found
They were too high for my unaided hand—
To reach them, one should David's sling command.
They only hissed me from their dizzy height,
As I awaked from this dream of the night.

V.

Need I interpret what is here expressed
In allegory,* as of form the best?
Need I to these three serpents give the name,
By which each revels in an earthly fame?
Three scientists they are who lead the way,
And God and truth would with their fossils slay.

VI.

As if they sat supreme in wisdom's gates,
And knowledge centered in their sickly pates,
They and their smaller satellites assume
That Moses' record is laid in its tomb;
That Christian men of learning all agree,
God's Book must yield to their geology!

---

*The following is an explanation of the allegorical representations contained in the preceding verses: The "field" is the world; the "mistress of the field" is human wisdom, or the spirit of the world; the "lofty trees" are the Christian nations; that one in whose branches the serpents were discovered to be lodged, is the Kingdom of Great Britain, and the "three serpents" are her leading infidel scientists, Huxley, Darwin, and Tyndal.

VII.

Forth from this Babylon, O Christian, come,
And make the Word of God alone your home;
Forth from their company, lest they enthrall,
And you with them should to perdition fall;
Wear not their title vain, but let it be
A synonym for infidelity.

VIII.

On lines that run exactly parallel,
No conflict can occur we know full well;
And such is science, rightly understood,
And Revelation, or the Word of God;
The one with nature's slow procession deals,
The other instantaneous growth reveals.

IX.

What may be in the heav'nly spheres around,
To men of science is conjectural ground;
Laws of development may there apply,
Which here, as God is true, we must deny;
For this terraqueous globe, and all its freight
Of living things, God did at once create.

X.

I hold a ripened almond in my hand,
And some description of its growth demand;
Am told of each development the term,
How grew the leaf, bud, blossom, nut, and germ;
I answer, no, all in one night was made—
Grown on a rod which near God's ark was laid.*

* See 17th chapter of Numbers for account of this miracle.

XI.

Now, from the solar system take a globe,
Its mysteries of growth bid science probe;
By periods immense it grew, you say?
Not so this earth, for here, as in a day,
God spake, and nature as we find it stood,
Creation's miracle, by him made good.

XII.

As in the Church's infancy we find
That prison doors and gates oft failed to bind
The servants of the Lord, who by the hand
Of angels could another key command;
So, by the grace of God, another key
Than theirs unlocks for us all mystery.

INVOCATION.

I.

ALMIGHTY GOD whose hand created me,
Dust of the ground, by grace allied to thee!
The Spirit of thy Son makes me thy child,
His blood renews my heart by sin defiled;
I come to thee for help who gave to me
Thy only Son to die on Calvary.

II.

To those who in his Spirit truly live,
Wilt thou not with Him all things freely give?
If without wavering I now believe,
Shall I not all I ask in faith receive?
My lack of wisdom, order, constancy,
O let thy gracious hand bestow on me!

III.

No fabled hill of song my thoughts would climb,
But only through the true reach the sublime;
Nor yet in courage would I lag behind
The chief of those whose songs instruct mankind;
The effort worthy, I invoke thy aid,
Eternal God, who me and all things made.

ARGUMENT OF CANTO I.

A PRELIMINARY view of Egypt as it is to-day, contrasted with what it was in the times of the early Pharaohs, and immediately precedent to the Exodus of the Children of Israel. The cause of its fall and present degradation among the nations. The Pyramids, for what purpose they were built, the futility of the effort, and the mute but weighty lesson they convey to after ages, and especially to men of the present time. The River Nile and the ruins which bestrew its banks; not these or the Egypt of the present, but of the far distant past, the field and time in which the scenes and events of the Poem are laid. The Canto closes with a reference to the powers of darkness present at that time, in an especial manner, in the Land of Ham.

MOSES RESISTED.

CANTO FIRST.

INTRODUCTORY VIEW OF EGYPT.

I.

My purpose leads me to a partial view
Of that strange land the River Nile flows through,
To reach by seven streams the mighty sea;
Its source still veiled in doubt and mystery,
When Stanley, seeking tardy Livingstone,
From Afric's heart the hidden secret won.

II.

Once chief of nations, envied everywhere,
O Egypt, land of Ham! why now so bare?
Once of the states most learned in the world,
From what a dizzy height hast thou been hurled!
Once center of refinement and of taste,
Why is thy power gone, thy land laid waste?

III.

A willing world once yielded unto thee,
In learning as in power, sovereignty;
The feeble kingdoms (and save Babylon,
What prince could claim to fill a rival throne?)
Paid thee their tribute, or dared not deny
Thy Pharaohs chief in royal majesty.

IV.

Why then so fallen, Egypt? why so base?
Why for a thousand years heir of disgrace?
Why for so many ages forced to own
A foreign race of monarchs on thy throne?
Shall I the answer make for thee instead?
'T is that the curse of God rests on thy head!

V.

While yet thy Pharaohs proudly sat in state,
And still a world acknowledged Egypt great,
Came to thine ears prophetic words, whose spell
Was like the deadly nightshade where they fell!
They bore the with'ring curse of God to thee,
Thy greatness vanished and thy majesty!

VI.

Land of the Pyramids! thy dwarfed estate
These piles of stones too faithfully relate;
They tell a double story to the eye,
That may be read by every passer-by,
Of poverty possessed, wealth passed away,
What Egypt was, and what it is to-day.

VII.

They tell of tyrants, by their subjects served,
Who less of honor than those serfs deserved—
Whose patient toil these mighty fabrics raised
On which posterity have wond'ring gazed;
O futile effort to perpetuate
The short-lived glory of the regal state!

VIII.

Ye silent monitors! mankind from thee
Might learn the value of simplicity;
True greatness lives not in the chiselled stone
Or monument, but in men's hearts alone;
Affection's hand may raise a shaft to fame,
But pyramids perpetuate no name!

IX.

But if I err in stating the intent
For which these mighty pyramids were meant;
If not to sepulchre some royal bones
The Pharaohs built these massive piles of stones,
But for religious use, as some suppose,
Their folly in the same broad channel flows.

X.

Alas! how much of wasted effort lies
At lofty portals pointing to the skies;
What sums of gold are squandered to express
The pride of life, not saintly lowliness;
God is not mocked—for as man sows he reaps,
The false may smile, but true religion weeps!

XI.

God has no temple now of wood or stone,
No marble shrines his Spirit deigns to own;
But who himself by grace learns to deny,
He by his holy word will sanctify,
And whereso'er a Christian walks the sod,
There is a temple of the living God!

XII.

If Egypt by her pyramids essayed
To win the favor of the gods she made
Of wood and stone, are we much wiser grown?
Was not her folly less than is our own?
No costly pile can heaven's favor win,
The city's pride is oft the Church's sin.

XIII.

Ere Greece a seat of learning had become,
Or Romulus and Remus founded Rome;
Ere Cyrus to the regal height attained,
Or Babylon her wide dominion gained,
Thy wise men, Egypt, wrought themselves a name,
And gave Egyptian learning world-wide fame.

XIV.

Why, Egypt, is thy burden heavy now?
Why were the chaplets torn from off thy brow?
Why from the topmost of the nations hurled,
And made the lowest nation in the world?
'T was that thy wise men once, with magic wand,
Resistance dared to the Almighty hand!

XV.

Thy king and people, won by Satan's guile,
Did on th' unequal contest blindly smile;
Themselves becoming thus by act allied,
Not to the winning, but the losing side;
For who can fight with God, or prosp'rous be,
Who dares oppose divine authority?

XVI.

When by the counsel of a Joseph led,
Thy people as on heav'nly manna fed;
But when forgetting him they faithless grew,
The God of Jacob heav'nly light withdrew;
So is it ever, in the course of things,
That evil counsel followed ruin brings.

XVII.

Strange land! whose fields when thirsty seek supply,
Not from the clouds, but from the Nile near by;
That stream itself no rain-fall law obeys,
But laws peculiar to itself displays;
Once gran'ry of the world, its fields supplied
A famine-stricken world that else had died.

XVIII.

The Nile! still Egypt's treasure and its stay,
Name once a synonym for mystery;
What ruins now its higher banks bestrew,
That once to palaces and temples grew!
Whose walls, unpeopled, slowly passed away,
Or by the blasts of war fell in a day.

XIX.

Nor these alone, or chiefly these, the store
Of habitations that its banks once bore,
But lowlier abodes by thousands stood,
To shelter Egypt's countless working brood;
Who, born not to command but to obey,
Here played their parts in life's unequal day.

XX.

Along its banks the serf his task still plies,
Or seeks the shade of trees from cloudless skies,
When hotter suns beat down upon his brain,
Or heated air blows from the sandy plain;
But few its toilers now and sparse its fields—
The Nile no more its vast provision yields.

XXI.

But not in Egypt's store of surplus grain,
Nor in her ruins that bestrew the plain;
Not in her pyramids that pierce the sky,
And time and elements seem to defy;
Not in her present state or future weal,
Do I in Egypt now an int'rest feel.

XXII.

My eye would rest upon that point of time,
When over Egypt, glory'ng in her prime,
That proudest of the Pharaohs sat enthroned,
Beneath whose hand the sons of Jacob groaned;
And may that God who heard his people's cry,
My mental eye with stronger sight supply.

XXIII.

Before my vision now wave fields of grain,
And villages and hamlets dot the plain;
For piles of ruins palaces appear,
And multitudes in motion everywhere;
Nor these alone my fancy can discry,
But evil pow'rs unseen by mortal eye.

XXIV.

As once in Eden Satan's daring hand
Was raised to frustrate the Divine command—
And as when God bade life from waters spring,
He may have aped him in each unclean thing—
So here in later time, on Zoan's field,
Satanic power could some wonders yield.

ARGUMENT OF CANTO II.

THE highly favored state of Egypt, both physical and intellectual, at the time of the Great Plagues, and the very low condition of the Children of Israel, because of their heavy bondage, at the same period. Two Hebrew serfs discovered in the evening twilight, outside the gate of Zoan, standing near a tomb, and in earnest conversation. They discuss the prophecy of Joseph, the flight of Moses, and their desperate condition as a people, hopeless without Divine interposition.

CANTO SECOND.

A COLLOQUY BETWEEN TWO HEBREWS AT THE TOMB OF JOSEPH—(AN EPISODE.)

I.

PRIDE goes before a fall, the Scripture says,
And, Egypt, such thy history displays;
Thy state, when at the threshold of thy doom,
Was like an orange-tree in fragrant bloom;
No warlike echoes smote upon thy ear,
Thy people had no foreign foes to fear.

II.

From sterner duties finding thus release,
They rapid strides made in the arts of peace;
Refinement flourished, knowledge grew apace,
And hovels oft to palaces gave place;
Prosperity on all things set its seal,
Save on the serfs ground underneath thy heel.

III.

And chief of those, the toiling mass of men
Who did the drudg'ry of thy kingdom then,
Were Jacob's children, now a multitude,
Crushed under foot, but still with hope imbued;
These walked amidst thy scenes of wealth and ease
As if in icy chains, with shaking knees!

IV.

O Israel! the story of thy wrongs
To ev'ry age and ev'ry land belongs!
Brought into bondage not by war's behest,
But by the will of those thy counsel blessed,
To this thy slavery to Egypt's lords,
No parallel our history affords.

V.

O Egypt! in this deed of treachery,
Satanic influence we plainly see;
Thy coward fear was but the instrument
By which he sought God's truth to circumvent—
To prostrate those who claimed him for their Lord,
Walked in his ways, and trusted in his word.

VI.

Though evil counsel followed long may bear
A fruit of seeming good, O man, beware!
For as in Egypt's case, so must it be
In every man's, the road to infamy;
A stepping downward, though one seems to rise,
Is every act that God and right denies.

VII.

Outside the gate of Pharaoh's capital,
Near where the shadows from the towers fall,
Two of those sons of toil in thought I see,
Beneath the shelter of an olive-tree,
In converse low, beside an ancient tomb,
Just visible in twilight's falling gloom.

VIII.

The tomb itself, securely built of stone,
Does no idolatrous devices own;
But, like its neighbors of less note around
(For closer view reveals a burial ground),
Is Jewish, and, judged by the path well-worn,
Though centuries old is not of int'rest shorn.

IX.

Approaching them I hear the elder say,
With deep drawn sigh: "Here sleeps the blessed clay,
That form embalmed and coffined, Jacob's son,
Our brother Joseph, once excelled by none
In power, here in this ungodly land,
Save him who held the scepter in his hand.

X.

"His prophecy, graved there upon the stone,
In characters to Coptic eyes unknown,
I love to read, for oft it comforts me
In hours of sadness and despondency,
When on my soul the chains of bondage press,
And lowest sinks the hope of our redress.

XI.

"'God will most surely visit you, and ye
Shall bear me hence'—thus reads the prophecy—
'To that good land he gave to Abraham,
And to his seed, long ere we hither came.'"
Here ceased the elder, and the younger said:
"Great Joseph's words have many comforted."

XII.

He paused, then added: "I have heard to-day
That news has come from Moses, far away
And long thought dead. To Midian he fled,
Where he has one of Jethro's daughters wed.
In him my father, who lies buried there,
Once hoped to find our great deliverer."

XIII.

"The news is true," the elder here replied,
"He now lives there; but what doth it betide?
Save that, ignobly, one born to command,
At fourscore years wields but a shepherd's wand!
Unhappy stroke! that one Egyptian slew,
And countless blows upon his people drew!"

XIV.

"A luckless stroke indeed," the other said,
"But noble, still, the weaker side to aid;
For who can hear oppression's heavy blows,
Unmoved impulsively to interpose?"
To which the elder musingly replied:
"Where impulse leads sound judgment turns aside.

XV.

"Our Moses should have waited patiently,
Not ventured rashly on an unknown sea;
For one arm, though with giant strength endued,
Were madly raised against a multitude!
That act alone evinced him unprepared,
Unfitted for the leadership he dared.

XVI.

"How many evils oftentimes are pent
In one rash deed that springs from good intent!
How many actions in the best we find
Born of brute instinct, rather than of mind!
How much of life we live as by mistake,
Blest if at last a safe retreat we make!

XVII.

"Our social fabric is so ramified,
Man to his fellow-man so closely tied,
So many hidden springs we cannot see,
That he is wisest who walks cautiously,
Not ruled by impulse, but by judgment swayed;
In hands like these our cause were wisely laid."

XVIII.

The younger Hebrew thoughtfully replied:
"You reason well. It cannot be denied
That partial views oft overlook the end,
And to the false attractive features lend.
Now in your clearer light the deed I view,
Which one avenged, and many did undo.

XIX.

"Had Moses waited patiently till now,
He might have worn the crown upon his brow;
For would he not, as Pharaoh's daughter's son,
Himself have now ascended Egypt's throne?
This heirship to the throne he threw away,
When at his feet the dead Egyptian lay.

XX.

"The leading nation now beneath the sun,
As Egypt's king what good he might have done,
Not to his people only, but the world,
Wherever Egypt's ensign is unfurled!
Thrice hapless blow that laid one foeman dead,
And such prospective greatness forfeited."

XXI.

To this the elder, smiling, made reply:
"Though in that view you have good company,
I share it not; for I remember well,
That long before the vile Egyptian fell,
The princess' name young Moses would not bear,
But spurned the title of the royal heir.

XXII.

"He like myself looked forward to the day
When Jacob's tribes, released from slavery,
Should to their promised heritage repair,
And build themselves a name and glory there:
This hope to forfeit if he took the crown,
Moved him the royal lineage to disown.

XXIII.

"'T was not for this I blamed him, but the act
So hasty, rash, impulsive, weak in fact,
Which forced him far away, when had he stayed,
And of his courage better use had made,
Had wisely watched his opportunity,
By force or tact ere this we had been free.

XXIV.

"But now, alas! our masters stronger grow,
While cruel bondage lays our spirits low;
Our leaders worthy of the name are dead,
Or copying Moses, have for safety fled;
Since hope from human source no longer flows,
None have we now unless God interpose."

ARGUMENT OF CANTO III.

AARON and Miriam are discovered seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, on a slight eminence overlooking the River Nile, which flows sluggishly at their feet. They speak of their brother Moses, and Miriam recounts the story of the hiding of him by their mother in the ark of bulrushes, in the edge of the stream, where he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh, and adopted as her son. Aaron announces his intention of visiting their brother in his retreat in the land of Midian. Miriam seeks to dissuade him from his purpose of going on so long and dangerous a journey, but changes her mind upon further and stronger reasons given her by her brother—especially the announcement of the fact, that God had appeared to him the night before, and commanded him to go and meet Moses—and promises to help forward his early departure. The question thus so happily disposed of, the two, arm in arm, lovingly and quietly return to their home.

CANTO THIRD.

AARON AND MIRIAM.

I.

If in pursuit of every good we need
Thy presence, Lord, O how can I proceed
In this endeavor, with its lofty aims,
Which for its field so wide a bound'ry claims—
How, without thee? O let me feel thee near,
That in thy light my pathway may be clear.

II.

The hope of pleasing Thee my spirit feeds,
And now my work more easily proceeds;
Rhyme but the vehicle truth to convey,
And arguments in truth's defense essay;
My chief desire, not man's approving nod,
But thine, my blessed Master, Saviour, God!

III.

'T is sunset hour. Beneath yon trees, whose boughs
Refreshing shade for man and beast allows,
Upon the trunk of one that prostrate lies,
Two persons sit, and speak with tearful eyes;
Their dark hair intermingled well with gray,
Declares them aged, as we moderns say.

IV.

A male and female, not of common mold,
Though Egypt's serfish garbs their forms enfold;
Their features strongly marked, and in their mien,
And eyes, a native majesty is seen;
So much alike! their faces well proclaim,
That from the same blest parentage they came.

V.

Just at their feet, down a declivity,
The Nile rolls sluggishly on to the sea;
There to the right, but lower down the stream,
The palace towers in the sunset gleam;
While to the left, not half a league away,
The Hebrew quarters of the town once lay.

VI.

'T is Aaron and his sister, who have come
Across the fields, from their not distant home,
To this retreat, not to enjoy the view,
Nor yet, on Aaron's part, past scenes renew;
But that he may to Miriam confide
A secret he would tell to none beside.

VII.

As on his hand her own she gently laid,
The sister to her brother, musing, said:
"This place is dear to me! it is the same
To which dear mother with our brother came,
When she our treasure could no longer hide,
And in the ark did all to God confide!

VIII.

"Beneath yon overhanging sycamore,
Among the flags, she made the ark secure,
Then me to this high point to watch she sent,
While, leading you, she homeward slowly went;
And there, a little later in the day,
The princess saw it as she came this way.

IX.

"She told her maid to bring the ark ashore,
Which the sweet burden of our brother bore,
And, op'ning it, the waking infant's cry
Filled her kind heart with tender sympathy;
His sweet face, too, her maidens' praises won,
They called him beautiful to look upon.

X.

"The princess, turning to her maidens, smiled,
And said, 'The Nile has given me a child!
But what to do with him perplexes me,
Since, for the present, this must secret be;
He is a Hebrew, by our law consigned
A cruel death in infancy to find.'

XI.

"Her maids were silent, and I ventured near,
And spake to her in accents low but clear:
Shall I go fetch a Hebrew nurse? I said;
She bade me go, and I for mother sped,
And shared the joy my message to her brought,
As she her Miriam to her bosom caught."

XII.

She paused, and Aaron said: "'T is fourscore years
Since he was born; how short the time appears!
I then was three, and you just out of nine,
Bright for your age, they say, sweet sister mine!
And forty years ago our brother fled,
When the Egyptian at his feet lay dead.

XIII.

"These years we scarce have sep'rate been a day,
But now, dear sister, I must hence away;
For ever since I heard our brother dwelt
A fugitive in Midian, I have felt
Desire to visit him; and, now made free
From duty in the field, naught hinders me.

XIV.

"'T is three days' journey to the mount of God,
A highway, plainly marked, will be my road—
The same, in part, that hence doth eastward lie—
And frequent inns will all my wants supply;
My faithful beast will safely carry me,
And God, I feel, will bear me company."

XV.

"But, brother," Miriam urged, "you are too old,
The way is long, and dangers manifold;
Give over this your purpose rash I pray,
And with your family and sister stay;
For if you go from us to Midian,
My brother dear, we ne'er shall meet again."

XVI.

"Urge me not thus, my sister," he replied;
"I have a secret that I will confide
To your safe ears, which, when you patient hear,
You then will bid me go, and nothing fear;
'T is this: the Lord last night appeared to me,
And bade me go meet Moses near the sea.

XVII.

"He will return with me, the angel said,
And you shall meet again our brother fled;
For what intent he comes I am not told,
But he will all to me in time unfold;
And even now he may be on the way,
So I to meet him must not long delay."

XVIII.

"God's will be done!" his sister said, resigned,
"But I shall follow you with anxious mind,
Till your return; and I will daily pray
That Jacob's God may brighten all your way,
And bring you safely back from Midian,
That I may you and Moses meet again.

XIX.

"O Israel! shall I indeed behold
Thy leaf and bud of promises unfold?
And shall I see thy sunrise, long delayed,
The prophecy fulfilled thy Joseph made?
It is fulfilled! God visits us in thee,
Propitious hour of Jacob's destiny!

XX.

"I'll wait thy coming with impatient heart,
But not one syllable will I impart;
No, let our tribes assembled hear from you
The first breath of the news, if it be true;
Your eloquence their icy souls shall warm,
And to the news so good will add a charm.

XXI.

"If it be true—alas! I do forget,
The purport of your journey 's secret yet!
The faithful servant moves not to fulfill
His own design, but do his Master's will,
Content if at the last the plan he sees,
By which he wrought, with what was right agrees."

XXII.

They paused, as if engaged in silent pray'r,
Then Miriam spake again: "I will prepare
Your needful outfit with the greatest speed,
That you may on your way at once proceed;
Nor would I have you needless waste a day,
For God's commands admit of no delay."

XXIII.

Now rising from their seat, his offered arm
The sister took, and gave it pressure warm;
They turned and trod the path that homeward lay,
Across an orange-grove, not far away;
A noble pair, though lowly now they seem,
By nature gifted with an air supreme.

XXIV.

Yes, Aaron! thou and Miriam shalt stand
Next to thy brother Moses in command!
Great in the kingdom now approaching birth,
Whose glory, after while, shall fill the earth;
And through all time, in sacred history,
Your virtues and your faults shall blazoned be!

ARGUMENT OF CANTO IV.

AFTER two days, Aaron departs from his home to meet Moses, journeying along the great highway between Africa and Asia. Some of the historic incidents connected with this route of travel. The close of the first day brings him to the public inn, where the brethren of Joseph stopped, and where the steward found the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. The evening of the third day brings him in view of Horeb. The meeting of the brothers at the foot of the mount. They repair to an inn, where, after a brief rest and some refreshment for his brother, Moses recounts the wonderful and most gracious revelations that God made to him at the bush which "burned and was not consumed." The miracles of the rod turned to a serpent, and of the leprous hand. At the close of the relation Moses acquaints Aaron with the fact that God had selected him to be his spokesman, and to share the honor of delivering the Children of Israel from their bondage to the Egyptians, and leading them to the Land of Promise. Aaron informs Moses that Jehovah had also appeared to him, and sent him to the wilderness on his present mission.

CANTO FOURTH.

THE JOURNEY TO THE MOUNT OF GOD—MOSES AND AARON.

I

Two busy days to Miriam passed away,
Which, to her brother, savored of delay;
The morning of the third saw at his gate
His white ass saddled, and in trav'ling state,
Which soon the Levite issuing forth bestrode,
And turned her head and took the eastern road.

II.

Historic road! by millions trod before,
Who over it a world of traffic bore!
Great thoroughfare between two continents,
Whose history is crowded with events,
That to the Christian, if not pagan, heart
Will ever interest to it impart.

III.

In later time along this highway trod
The blessed mother of the Son of God,
With Joseph, who the priceless burden bore,
To seek in Egypt a retreat secure;
When forced from Bethlehem to flee away,
Lest Herod's soldiers should the infant slay.

IV.

The Levite thoughtfully pursues his way,
His beast, as he, impatient of delay;
Alone now for awhile he rides along,
Now threads his way the moving crowds among;
Yet not alone: the God he serves so well
Is leading him, though all invisible!

V.

He thinks of Abraham, who this way came
When famine brought him to the land of Ham;
And of his want of trust, which prompted him
To practice falsehood and his name bedim,
Instructing Sarah to assume the place
Of sister to him, to her own disgrace.

VI.

Alas! will the believer never learn
The many wiles of Satan to discern—
How he can work on the distrustful mind,
And with its schemes his own devices wind?
How he can make the wrong appear the right,
If once from faith we turn to walk by sight?

VII.

Of Joseph Aaron thinks, who came this way,
Sold by his brethren into slavery;
And of those guilty brethren, too, at last,
Who twice along this highway trembling passed;
And of great Jacob, who alive once came,
Died, and was borne in state back o'er the same!

VIII.

Alone—and yet not consciously alone!
He knew he was accompanied by One
Who, though invisible to mortal eyes,
Immortal vision to his saints supplies.
In thoughtful mood the time thus passed away,
Till at the inn he stopped, as closed the day.

IX.

Historic inn! So the tradition said,
Where Joseph's brethren twice before had staid;
Once, when they left their brother Simeon bound,
Once, when the silver cup the steward found.
Here now, the Levite, Aaron, travel-worn,
Reins in his beast, which him has hither borne.

X.

Another day, and ere the third is past
He sees his bourne, the Mount of God, at last!
A prospect to his weary soul most sweet,
The place where he will Moses shortly greet.
The angel said, "Go to the Mount of God,
And thou shalt meet thy brother on the road."

XI.

That brother who once high in favor stood
With Pharaoh and his court—by fortune wooed;
Called son of Pharaoh's daughter, who the crown
Would sooner than his hope in Christ disown:
Lost for long years, then as a wand'rer found,
As precious now as when in courts renowned.

XII.

He at a faster gait now urged his way
O'er some low hills that intervening lay,
Until in view of where the level road
Rose from the plain and touched the Mount of God,
There he beheld, as if expecting him,
A form majestic in the twilight dim.

XIII.

'T is Moses, Amram's youngest son, he sees
There on the mount, half hid among the trees;
Dismounting now, the intervening space
Of ground he crosses at a hurried pace,
And kisses him, ere he is full aware
Whose loving arms are clasped about him there!

XIV.

Twoscore of years have passed since last they met,
And gray hairs in their beards succeed the jet;
While sober age, with many lines of care
Show in their faces, that in youth were fair;
Each notes the changes in the other wrought,
And with true delicacy hides the thought.

XV.

But of each other's present weal they ask,
And Moses of his sister, sweeter task!
Nor yet to speak of weightier matters chose,
For Aaron, weary, needed some repose;
A village half a league beyond them lay,
And to its inn now Moses led the way.

XVI.

He, with his wife, Zipporah, had lodged there
The night before, and she from thence did bear
Their two boys back to Midian that day,
With their grandfather for awhile to stay.
There soon arrived, themselves and beasts refreshed,
With needful food for each, the brothers rest.

XVII.

But ere they slept, in accents low and sweet,
To Aaron Moses told how he did meet
God at the Burning Bush whose flame illumed
The mountain side, itself still unconsumed!
How he there bade him back to Egypt go,
And free his people, and great wonders show.

XVIII.

He told him how, when he in doubtful mind,
For fear of Pharaoh, sought excuse to find,
God bade him cast his rod upon the ground,
Which to a serpent turned! And when he found
Him timid still, man fearing more than God,
He in severer manner felt the rod!

XIX.

His hand thrust in his bosom came forth white;
He in his body felt the leprous blight!
And as the dreadful token he beheld,
He saw himself from all mankind expelled,
For not one nation only, but the world,
The leprous mortal from its presence hurled.

XX.

A moment only such thoughts pressed his mind,
For God soon spake again, in accents kind;
At whose command the leprous hand once more
Thrust in his bosom he now drew forth pure!
This miracle served well the purpose meant,
And his own will to that of God's was bent.

XXI.

He told him how God all his doubts would solve,
How he bore with his servant's weak resolve;
How he by arguments his faith restored,
And that, in fine, when he his speech deplored
God spake of him so kindly, and the care
And honor bade him with his brother share.

XXII.

Thus far, and Aaron scarce had said a word,
But that God spake of him his being stirred!
And in the moonlight one might plainly trace,
The grateful tears upon his manly face;
These Moses, seeing, gently wiped away,
As on the inn floor, half reclined, he lay.

XXIII.

'T was Aaron's voice that next the silence broke,
And words of comfort to his brother spoke;
Declaring that God had to him appeared,
And of his coming he from Him first heard;
That though God spake not then His fuller mind,
The purport he had hopefully divined.

XXIV.

"Go meet thy brother in the wilderness,"
This message he received, brief and express;
The words implied, his brother came that way,
It was enough—his part was to obey;
He ceased, and Moses said: "The words so brief,
With your dear presence, bring me great relief."

ARGUMENT OF CANTO V.

Moses and Aaron leave the village inn, and take their journey toward Egypt. On the way, after rehearsing the particulars of what occurred in the Holy Mount, Moses relates to Aaron the circumstance of Jehovah's having met him again at the inn, and of Zipporah's timely interposition in an act of delayed obedience, whereby God's anger was turned away and his own life graciously spared. They cross the extreme eastern border of the Egyptian province of Goshen, and on the third day arrive in view of the Zoanian Branch of the Nile. Reaching Zoan, they pass by its Eastern gate, and stop at the village where Aaron and their sister reside. The meeting with Miriam. The joy of the Jewish villagers over their return. Moses despatches messengers throughout Goshen to call together an assembly of the heads of the tribes of Israel, acquainting them with the fact that he has come to them as the accredited messenger of the God of Jacob.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE RETURN TO EGYPT.

I.

They rose refreshed, and soon were on the way,
Their faces westward, while behind them lay
The Promised Land. To bring God's people there
Was now their mission and their anxious care.
Alas! how little either of them dreamed
How long the way would prove, though short it seemed.

II.

Well, better thus to journey on in hope,
Perhaps, than see with what we have to cope;
For who his foes in troops would come upon
If he might meet them singly, one by one?
No, conquer difficulties as they rise,
Though they may sometimes take us by surprise.

III.

How many knapsacks would be laid aside
Did soldiers know the hardships that betide?
How many travellers at home would stay
Could they foresee the roughness of the way?
How many schemes had never been begun
That started have to wealth or glory run?

IV.

With what bright hopes the Levite now returned!
What newly lighted fires within him burned!
A love of country, not by bonds suppressed,
A home in Canaan, long by faith possessed,
Now to be realized; O happy day,
That Jacob's bonds shall break and cast away!

V.

Great is the Levite, now, in heaven's eye,
But greater he who bears him company;
In meekness greater, and in mind and heart,
And greater in his God-appointed part:
No easy triumphs for his mental food,
He travels on in pensive, thoughtful mood.

VI.

His thoughts now backward stray to Midian,
Now forward sweep across the sandy plain;
These drawn by cords of love, whose further end
The mother and his children comprehend;
Those by a higher sense, which bids disown
Whatever thwarts our serving God alone.

VII.

In silence they awhile pursued their way,
Till Aaron, rousing from his revery,
Requested Moses to repeat each word
He from Jehovah in the mountain heard;
Especially the message they should tell,
On their return, to gathered Israel

VIII.

As from his lips each sacred sentence fell,
His brother fixed them in his mem'ry well,
That he might faithfully rehearse the same,
In Israel's ears when they to Egypt came.
This ended, Moses to his brother told
A thing till now he chose not to unfold.

IX.

He said: "The mighty God who spake to me
The gracious words I have rehearsed to thee,
Appeared again, while at the inn I stayed,*
Not now in flame, but as a man arrayed;
As when he tarried once at Abram's tent,
When he two angels on to Sodom sent.

X.

"But not as then he now came graciously,
Nor as to him he here appeared to me;
Though grand in mien, he wore an angry look,
At sight of which my tongue its speech forsook!
I saw my sin, before not fully seen,
And in the dust I sought my face to screen.

---

*In the Book of Exodus, (iv., 24–26,) we read: "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go." The momentary revocation of the commission which God gave his servant Moses at the Burning Bush, assumed in the twelfth verse of this Canto, is based upon this passage of Scripture.

XI.

"I to Zipporah in two things gave way,
In two the will of God failed to obey;
The one express—a rite I left undone;
The other but implied—to go alone:*
In each I felt a weight upon my soul,
But strangely yielded to my wife's controul.

XII.

"For this he met me with the look severe,
Revoking my commission to appear
Before the king of Egypt and demand
Release of Jacob's children at his hand:
Zipporah heard, and now with terror wild
A stone-knife seized, and circumcised our child.

XIII.

"God then in mercy raised from me his hand,
And graciously renewed the great command;
Zipporah to her father's house returned,
And I, from all, this needful lesson learned:
No more to add to what God bids me do,
But mark his words, and narrowly construe."

---

* When Zipporah and her children were brought to Moses, by his father-in-law Jethro, at the camp at Hazaroth, her coming occasioned a sad estrangement between him, and Aaron and Miriam; from which fact we may reasonably infer that her accompanying him at this time would have been attended with trouble, and perhaps a serious delay of his great work. See the 12th chapter of Numbers, for an account of the sedition of Miriam and Aaron against Moses, "because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married."

XIV.

Alas! what evil consequences flow
From things indifferent, or seeming so!
A loose construction is at once the bane
Of Church and State, things sacred and profane;
Unsafe 's the messenger who will presume
His letters of instruction to illume.

XV.

That Jewish covenant of blood sublime,
In value second, first in point of time,
I wonder not it still should make them one,
Wherever scattered underneath the sun!
The type the Jew, the Antitype enfolds,
And in one body all God's people holds.

XVI.

When Moses had his last narration closed,
In which Zipporah timely interposed,
Her true devotion as a wife displayed,
The rite performed, the sword uplifted stayed,
His brother first of its great lesson spake,
And hoped he, too, good use of it might make.

XVII.

He added: "God gave Abraham that sign
To seal his faith in promises divine,
In gracious words that from Jehovah fell,
With whom he knew naught was impossible;
Great was his faith, and we for such should pray,
To help us in our work from day to day."

XVIII.

They now in silence rode, or else assuaged
The tedium on lighter themes engaged;
Their hearts and feelings so in unison
That oft their thoughts in the same course would run;
And e'en their beasts at equal paces pressed,
As if their masters' spirits they possessed.

XIX.

Some friendly clouds, unusual in that clime,
Their shadows o'er them cast from time to time;
Along the road that through the desert lay
They journeyed, skirting Goshen on the way;
Though distant far the city of that name,
Where they should soon such happy news proclaim.

XX.

The first day's journey and the second passed,
They reach the Nile's Zoanian Branch at last,
And Zoan see, as sinks the third day's sun,
Whose parting rays now guild her towers dun;
They pass the gate, for they to-night will stay
At Aaron's village, scarce a league away.

XXI.

There in the dusk of ev'ning they alight,
Where now, with eyes like stars of eve so bright,
Their sister Miriam meets them at the door,
With welcome fond as sister's lips e'er bore;
While through the village flies the happy news,
That brings to Aaron's house his neighbor Jews.

XXII.

Their greetings ended, and the tumult stilled
That for a time the air with shoutings filled,
Ere Moses slept he trusty heralds sent,
Who throughout Goshen on the morrow went,
To call the elders, bidding them appear,
And from his brother's lips God's message hear.

XXIII.

How many have that message longed to hear,
Who at no call of Moses can appear!
How many weary hearts wished for this day,
Whose pulses ceased while they in bondage lay!
Thrice favored these, the elders called to meet,
And hear from them words from their God so sweet.

XXIV.

O Israel! by Egypt trodden sore,
Deliverance from God is at thy door!
Thy skies are brightening, so long o'ercast,
Thy furnace of affliction ends at last;
The signal Lamp, which long has dimly burned,
Shall with the morrow to a sun be turned!

ARGUMENT OF CANTO VI.

THE elders of Israel, heads of families and others, men of note among the Hebrews, are gathered together at the call of Moses and Aaron, and addressed by the latter. Aaron, as directed by his brother, works the wonderful signs which God had commanded them to do before the assembled heads of the tribes. The shepherd's rod cast down upon the floor is turned into a serpent; his hand thrust into his bosom comes forth leprous; and, finally, observing a doubtful mind expressed in the faces of a few of his auditors, Aaron calls upon one of them, Korah, of the tribe of Levi, to bring a vessel of water from his house near at hand, which is poured out in the presence of the assembly, and turns to blood. The elders believe Moses and Aaron and worship God.

CANTO SIXTH.

THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ELDERS, AND ADDRESS OF AARON.

I.

Lo, Israel's elders in assembly stand,
Not clad in purple, though a princely band;
Called from their homes, their mortar-beds, or fields,
Where each a compulsory service yields,
They came with haste on the appointed day,
In wonder some—all in expectancy.

II.

Heads of the tribes, men of exacter mold,
Who worthily the place of honor hold;
No common faces theirs, but in their mien
A power to command is plainly seen,
And under coarse exteriors sits enshrined
The royal presence of superior mind.

III.

There Nahshon stands, whose sister Aaron wed,
Of Judah's tribe the now acknowledged head;
Near him, Nathaniel, of Issachar,
Who does his tribal honor humbly bear;
Shelumiel next, the prince of Simeon,
Near whom Eliab stands, of Zebulon.

IV.

Manassah in Gamaliel appears,
A name for wisdom famed in after years;
Next him Elishama, of Ephraim,
Elizar, prince of Reuben, next to him;
Ahiezar, the chief of Dan, there stands,
And Pagiel, who Asher's tribe commands.

V.

The chiefs of Benjamin and Napthali,
Ahira, Abidan, are standing by;
And there by Moses' side is aged Hur,
Who did with Aaron afterward appear;
When Amalek disputed Israel's way,
And Moses' arms uplifted turned the day.

VI.

There, too, stands Joshua, the son of Nun,
Who his initial victory then won;
Of youthful face, a tall and graceful form,
An eagle eye, a heart with great faith warm;
Now known to few, if known, indeed, at all,
On him the chief command will one day fall.

VII.

There Korah stands, with strong ambition fired,
Who to the head of Levi's tribe aspired;
And Dathan and Abiram, spirits bold,
Who in themselves sufficiency behold.
God's curse upon this triad after fell,
Earth oped beneath them, and they sank to hell!

VIII.

The twelve first-mentioned, elders most renowned,
Are in a semi-circle ranged around;
And back of these the other chiefs appear,
While fronting them stand Moses, Aaron, Hur.
Contemplate them a moment, as they stand,
Men call them slaves, but angels princes grand!

IX.

Those named, with others by the tribes revered,
Have at the place of conference appeared,
And, after salutations meet, await
What Moses and his brother shall relate;
To whom the latter now at Moses' nod,
Proclaims the message from their fathers' God.

X.

"My kinsmen, we at God's command appear,
And by his order you assemble here;
Great is the honor he upon us lays,
Who thus his words to Israel conveys;
He first to Moses, and by him to me,
By you at last proclaims his great decree.

XI.

"When Moses from the vengeful Pharaoh fled,
In Midian God hid him: Thence he led
His flock to Horeb (now a shepherd turned),
Where, when he came, he saw a bush that burned
And yet was unconsumed, though fiery bright,
And turned aside to see the wondrous sight.

XII.

"Approaching it, a voice spoke from the flame
And called him, 'Moses, Moses!' twice by name;
Then bade him put his shoes from off his feet,
As when one treads on holy ground is meet;
'T was Jacob's God who thus in flame appeared,
And who his people's cry for help has heard.

XIII.

"As told you, brethren, in our message brief,
God visits us to bring our tribes relief;
Four hundred years by bondage sorely pressed,
The hour arrives to give his people rest;
In Egypt here, as on fair Canaan's ground,
Iniquity has reached its utmost bound.

XIV.

"The living God, whom we have long obeyed,
To Abraham by promises conveyed,
And to his seed, a goodly heritage,
Which to deliver us he does engage;
Our part assigned by the Omnipotent
At present is, a passive, free consent.

XV.

"God at the Bush to Moses said, 'I am
The God of Jacob, Isaac, Abraham,'
Which, when our brother heard, he to the sod
Bowed down his head, afraid to look on God.
He then claimed Jacob's children for his own—
Said he had heard his people's bitter moan.

XVI.

"'I know their sorrows,' thus God spake to him,
'The bitter cup by Ham filled to the brim;
And I am come my people now to free,
And take them to their land beyond the sea;
While on their proud oppressors I will pour
A vial of wrath, than theirs ten-fold more sore.

XVII.

"'A goodly land, and large, I will bestow,
Which shall for them with milk and honey flow;
The place where dwell the Hittite, Canaanite,
The Hivite, Amorite, and Jebusite,
Who sprang from him by Noah cursed of old,
And now the land I gave to Israel hold.'

XVIII.

"He further said: 'The God of Abraham,
Of Isaac, and of Jacob, is my name;
This shall forever my memorial be,
By which to Pharaoh I commission thee;
But first, go gather Jacob's elders there,
And to them all I say to thee declare.

XIX.

"'Say thou: Thy fathers' God appeared to me,
Who, by his messengers, now visits thee.
The wrongs done unto thee by Ham he sees,
And thy deliverance from him decrees;
He bids thee with us to the king repair,
And this his sovereign will to him declare.'

XX.

"These further words He added: 'I well know
The King of Egypt will not let you go,
Not by a mighty hand, until I smite
The land of Egypt, and destroy it quite;
Then he will let you go with a full hand,
For what ye will ye shall of them demand.'

XXI.

"When Moses with objections interfered,
By mighty tokens God confirmed his word;
As, when he questioned your belief, this rod,
Cast down, was to a serpent turned by God!
Who next a wonder on his body wrought,
A sign with pain as well as terror fraught.

XXII.

"These signs (with one for you held in reserve,
Should these his purposes not fully serve),
For confirmation of your faith, the Lord
Bids us a repetition here afford;
'That they,' said he, 'by these great signs may see
That I, indeed, have thus appeared to thee.'"

XXIII.

His speech here closed. The auditors await
In breathless silence for the tokens great;
The first two wrought, the twelve their faith proclaim;
Some doubt, of whom one Aaron calls by name:
"Our kinsman, Korah, from his house near by
Shall water for God's other sign supply."

XXIV.

'T is brought, poured out, changed midway in its flood,
The first half water, and the last half blood!
As filled with awe each head is lowly bent
They worship God, who Moses to them sent;
"God visits us," they rapturously say—
"The words of Joseph are fulfilled to-day!"

ARGUMENT OF CANTO VII.

Moses and Aaron, accompanied by the twelve elders representing the families of Jacob, repair to the palace of the King. They are admitted to the presence of Pharaoh, and humbly present their message. Pharaoh treats it contemptuously, and commands them to return to their menial servitude. They retire from the royal presence depressed, and with their faith in God weakened. Pharaoh orders the taskmasters to increase the burdens of the people, withholding straw, but requiring the same amount of labor as before. The people, in their distress, send a deputation to the King to seek relief, but they are received with harshness, and their prayer is denied. Leaving the palace, they meet Moses and Aaron, and in their anguish of soul they upbraid them as the cause of their calamity. Moses brings his trouble before God, who comforts him, and re-establishes his wavering faith.

CANTO SEVENTH.

MOSES, AARON, AND THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL BEFORE PHARAOH.

I.

Now in excited groups the villagers
Discuss the news, or list with open ears,
While from within the notes of holy mirth
Are heard resounding from each Jewish hearth;
From village on to village flies the word,
And Goshen's weary heart with joy is stirred.

II.

While thus the Hebrew heart impromptu pays
Its thanks to God in words of raptur'us praise,
The twelve chief elders, late in council met,
Their faces toward distant Zoan set,
With Moses and his brother to declare
The will of God to haughty Pharaoh there.

III.

As in their ears the last faint echo dies
They near the gate that next to Goshen lies;
In Zoan's eyes their coming scarce is fraught
With subject-matter for a passing thought,
Nor in their mien aught is there to appall
The weakest heart in Pharaoh's palace hall.

IV.

They reach the palace and admission find,
But long they wait to hear the royal mind;
Not whether he a few days' leave will give,
That they may go and worship God and live,
But whether now his august majesty
Will these his Hebrew serfs consent to see.

V.

This favor granted them, at last they stand
Before the mighty monarch of the land;
Proud as a Lucifer, if not so wise,
No spark of pity shows in his dark eyes,
But in its stead is seen a threat'ning glare
The wild beast shows when wakened from its lair.

VI.

The customary reverence they pay,
According to the manner of the day,
Then rising, Aaron speaks: "O mighty king,
A message from the Lord we to you bring,
And crave for it your favorable ear,
As coming from a King whom all should fear.

VII.

"The mighty Lord, the God of Israel,
Says, 'Let my people go, who with thee dwell,
Hence three days to the wilderness, and there
A sacrificial feast for me prepare.'"
Indignantly the king this answer made:
"Who is the Lord, that he should be obeyed?

VIII.

"I know him not," he added with a sneer,
"Nor will I let you go." The Levite, here
Repeating the demand, by argument
His cause to favor now sought to present—
Said Egypt's int'rest in obedience lay,
Lest God in anger should their servants slay.

IX.

To this the monarch deigned not a reply,
But darker grew his face, and in his eye
Some cruel purpose kindled to a flame,
As, calling now the brothers by their name,
"Why have ye thus the people's work delayed?
Go to your burdens!" he in anger said.

X.

With looks dejected, and a heavy heart,
They from the presence of the king depart;
Conflicting feelings strive for mastery,
Though plainly now their course is to obey;
In silence they retrace the road they came,
Where they must soon the sad result proclaim.

XI.

The brothers with the elders scarce retired,
Before the purpose of the king transpired:
"The officers of Egypt, who command
My Hebrew servants, bid before me stand!"
Thus spake the king; before him soon appear
His officers, each cruel taskmaster.

XII.

To these the king thus spake: "Ye shall no more
Give to the people straw, as heretofore,
But bid them go and gather in the fields,
Yet see that each the tale of bricks still yields.
The men are idle, and they therefore say,
Let us go sacrifice to God we pray.

XIII.

"Lay more work on them, make them labor hard,
Nor the vain words of Moses dare regard."
He closed; and soon his pliant taskmasters
Or go themselves, or send swift messengers,
Who to the various camps of Israel go,
And to their chiefs the royal mandate show.

XIV.

A double task instead of a reprieve!
With consternation they the words receive;
No straw, and yet the tale of bricks the same?
O cruel taskmasters, for shame, for shame!
Not Pharaoh, surely, but yourselves thus speak,
And by this stratagem some profit seek.

XV.

They reasoned thus, and sullenly obeyed,
But to fulfil their tasks in vain essayed,
Though far and wide, or singly or in bands,
They roamed the stubble-fields and barren lands
That round Raamses and round Pithon lay,
In search of straw to mix in with the clay.

XVI.

Hard strove they to comply, but strove in vain,
And two days' tasks unfinished now remain:
"Why have ye failed, both yesterday, to-day,
In your allotted tasks?" their masters say;
While on the Hebrew officers they fly,
And to their backs the cruel lash apply.

XVII.

In hope that Pharaoh will relief afford,
They now apply to him with one accord;
A deputation of the elders go,
And to the king their sad condition show—
Their tasks the same, the workmen straw refused,
The people's officers beat and abused.

XVIII.

No pity found they, but in pity's stead
A heart that only on their sorrow fed;
To idleness their hardship he assigned,
And to the same their pious turn of mind;
The masters' cruel usage he sustained,
Their heavy burden unrelaxed remained.

XIX.

"Since idleness to your distress has led,
Go, therefore, now and work," he harshly said;
"No straw shall ye receive, and yet the tale
Of bricks ye must deliver without fail."
Imperiously he motioned them away,
As if impatient of their longer stay.

XX.

O Israel! thy case seems sad indeed!
Thy officers with cruel lashings bleed;
Thy rising sun a moment did display
Its cheering face, then to dark clouds gave way;
All things forbidding seem, that seemed so bright,
As if thy breaking day turned back to night.

XXI.

As from the palace portal forth they go
Their various humors in their faces show;
Some full of rage, their teeth together set,
Some sorrowful, their cheeks with teardrops wet.
Or clogged with rage, or flowing out in tears,
Each heart its heavy weight of sorrow bears.

XXII.

Returning from the king they Moses meet,
And Aaron, who with bitter words they greet:
"The Lord look on you!" bitterly they say,
"Who have upon us brought this evil day;
The Lord look on you for the mischief done,
Who have his people into ruin run!"

XXIII.

Alas! to this what can they now reply?
Their silence speaks; their sympathetic eye
Proclaims that in their brethren's grief they share,
While they their imprecations meekly bear.
As Aaron joins them Moses turns away,
His troubled heart before his God to lay.

XXIV.

He pauses not to weigh his every word,
But with impatience supplicates the Lord,
Who knows his servant's heart is true, though faint,
And graciously attends to his complaint;
Says he will now on Pharaoh lay his hand,
And force him to drive Israel from his land

ARGUMENT OF CANTO VIII.

THE lapse of time since the arrival of Moses in Egypt. Moses and Aaron are sent to the Israelites with a message from God. They visit them at their present fields of labor at Raamses and Pithon, the treasure cities they are building for the king. Aaron attempts to address them, but they "hearken not unto them for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage." God appears to Moses again, and bids him go to the king. Moses objects, urging that, inasmuch as the Children of Israel would not hearken unto them, it was not to be expected that the king of Egypt would do so. God repeats the command, and arms his servant with power to work a miracle before Pharaoh. God also informs him that the king, who has heard that he had worked signs and wonders before the assembly of the elders of Israel, is expecting him.

CANTO EIGHTH.

THE VISIT OF MOSES AND AARON TO THE LABORING ISRAELITES.

I.

Days into weeks have passed since Moses came,
By God commissioned, to the court of Ham;
Since he before the gathered elders stood
And by his brother spake the words of God,
And wrought those signs that in them fixed belief—
A faith, alas, in most doomed to be brief.

II.

At God's command he goes again to them,
Whom heavier afflictions now o'erwhelm;
Goes with reluctance, and not willingly,
As doubtful what his welcome now will be,
Since on himself and brother they of late
Have charged the authorship of their sad fate.

III.

To Raamses and Pithon now they go,
This second message from the Lord to show;
Where now the men are gathered, laboring
To build these treasure-cities for the king;
Nor from their camps will they the workmen call,
But, tribe by tribe, they seek to speak to all.

IV.

As thus from camp to camp their way they hold,
They deeds of cruelty see manifold;
See here forms bending under heavy care,
And forms exposed and freshly bleeding there!
The masters on the last their lash apply,
All heedless of their victims' piteous cry.

V.

The very beasts by instinct sympathize,
When of their number one afflicted cries;
'T is man alone that pity's ear can close,
When on his fellow-man fall cruel blows.
Nor man of grace, but one by devils ruled,
And in the art of cruelty well schooled.

VI.

Alas! that man at man's behest should slay
His fellow-men, or treat them cruelly!
That tyrants on the throne should ever find
Such willing tools amongst their baser kind!
Not from above, but from beneath it springs,
The sin of man this serpent-nature brings.

VII.

As best they can the people they collect,
Though few their summons to appear respect;
To those who at their calls assemble, they
The words of comfort from the Lord convey;
Thus Aaron spake: "Ye sons of Jacob hear,
We come from God to bring you words of cheer."

VIII.

They first in order came, at twilight dim,
To Joseph's tribes, Manassah, Ephraim;
Their heavy labors ended for the day,
Some paused to listen, but more turned away;
While with the sighs from breaking heart-strings torn,
Some curses on them to their ears were borne.

IX.

Thus Aaron urged his suit: "Hear us, we pray,
Nor yet in sorrow turn from us away;
Remember ye how God with Jacob dealt,
How he the heavy hand of sorrow felt;
In youth, he from his home for refuge fled;
In age, his heart for Joseph sadly bled.

X.

"Doubt ye that God was with him all the way?
That he at length his darkness turned to day?
That all those things he hastily esteemed
Against him, were not really what they seemed?
That, though to him the clouds looked dark and dire,
Their upper surface glowed with heavenly fire?

XI.

"Turn, now, in thought to your great ancestor,
Whom, as a bondman, they to Egypt bore;
When in the stocks they pressed his aching feet,
Think ye that Joseph found the dungeon sweet?
Like you, he felt adversity's sharp dart,
That soul and body nearly thrust apart.

XII.

"God does the end from the beginning view;
He through refining fires our fathers drew,
That, in a furnace of affliction sore,
He might the dross consume, the gold make pure.
Then doubt him not, my brethren, but believe,
Ye shall rejoice, though now ye sadly grieve.

XIII.

"God bids us say, He will lay bare his arm,
And Egypt fill with terror and alarm;
Will your deliverer from bondage prove,
And you from hence to your own land remove;
Will be your God, while you redeemed shall be
His chosen people, prosperous and free."

XIV.

Persuasively he these and more words spake,
But no impression on their minds could make;
Their cup of sorrow full now to the brim,
The spark of faith burned in them low and dim;
No spoken words their weary hearts could cheer,
The future like the present looked so drear.

XV.

From Joseph's they to other tribes repaired,
To each the message faithfully declared;
But all, alas! by bondage so oppressed,
By silence their indifference expressed.
No faith in the miraculous had they,
While from them Pharaoh took the straw away!

XVI.

They reasoned as those do who God deny:
If God were theirs, and they were his, then why
Permitted he the evil still to be?
Why freed he not his people instantly?
To mortal ken there seemed a strange delay—
With God a thousand years is as a day!

XVII.

Now sick at heart with every day's survey,
The last field passed, they homeward took their way,
Their work well done, though bare to them it seemed,
Nor by one pleasant retrospect redeemed;
All God intended, doubtless, fully gained,
Though, to them, all things as at first remained.

XVIII.

As Moses, wakeful from the weary day,
Arose at night to meditate and pray,
God spake to him, and said: "Go, Moses, thou
And Aaron, to the king of Egypt now;
Repeat to him my sovereign command
To let my people go out of his land."

XIX.

"When our own people turn from us away,
Our words of comfort by harsh looks repay;
When they thy message sent by us reject,
What have we, Lord, from Pharaoh to expect;
Will he an audience grant, when these deny?"
Thus Moses meekly to him made reply.

XX.

He added: "Why, Lord, send me to the king,
In whose eyes I am but an unclean thing?
When in his regal presence late I stood,
He wore a look that boded me no good;
As if he would command his servants slay,
And to the dogs my body cast away."

XXI.

God answered now, to raise his drooping heart,
And more of confidence to him impart:
"I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, see;
And Aaron shall a prophet be to thee;
By him go utter all that I command,
And bid the king send Israel from his land."

XXII.

He further said: "The king will not regard
My message, and his heart will grow more hard,
That I my judgments and afflictions sore
May on himself and guilty people pour;
That, since they mercy scorn, they by the rod
May know and fear me as the Living God.

XXIII.

"Go thou to Pharaoh—nought of danger dread,
He shall not touch a hair upon thy head;
Though he look darkly on thee as before,
Though as a hampered lion he may roar,
Yet feel thou and thy brother no alarm,
For he is impotent to do thee harm.

XXIV.

"Lo, Pharaoh looks for thee, for he has heard
How ye before the elders here appeared;
And when he says: 'Show me a miracle,
If ye speak for the God of Israel,'
Thy shepherd's staff, cast down upon the floor,
Shall to a serpent turn as twice before."

ARGUMENT OF CANTO IX.

AT THE command of the Almighty, Moses and Aaron go again to Pharaoh. The king receives them more graciously than he did on the occasion of their former visit, and, after hearing the message from Aaron, he bids them perform a miracle in proof of the fact claimed that they come as ambassadors of the Supreme God. At a word from Moses, Aaron casts the rod upon the floor before Pharaoh and his court, which slowly changes into a hideous reptile. At the command of Pharaoh, the magicians of Egypt are called, and Jannes and Jambres, with half a score of other magicians of less note, appear in obedience to the summons, and are assigned their places confronting Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh acquaints them with the purpose for which they have been called; and at a signal from him, after invocation of two or three of their most popular gods, they cast their rods upon the floor before the king. The rods of the magicians, like that of Aaron, but by Satanic agency, are turned into serpents, but of a much smaller size. These, in their fright, seek refuge in the maw or stomach of the greater serpent, which opens her mouth and swallows them—natural history thus setting its seal to the genuineness of the miracle, both on the part of Aaron and Moses, acting through the power of God, and also on the part of Jannes and Jambres, acting through the power of Satan. The effect of the miracle wrought by the servants of God having been thus neutralized or destroyed by that wrought by the magicians, Moses and Aaron retire discomfited from the royal presence and return to their home.

CANTO NINTH.

THE MIRACLE OF THE ROD TURNED TO A SERPENT. FIRST CONFLICT BETWEEN MOSES AND THE MAGICIANS.

I.

Once more the servants of the Living God
Confront king Pharaoh, armed now with the rod.
He is surrounded by his nobles grand,
And less impatience shows, more self-command,
As Aaron re-declares, in manly tone,
The mandate of that God he will not own.

II.

Thus spake the Levite: "King of Egypt, hear!
We in our own name would not dare appear;
But when our God—who of all kings is King,
And of all lords is Lord—commands us bring
To fellow-men what he may deign to say
To them by us, our place is to obey.

III.

"From Israel's God we bring you no new word,
But only such as you before have heard,
Which he commands us in your ears repeat,
And ask for it the grave attention meet.
Thus saith the Lord: 'King Pharaoh lift thy hand,
And let my people go out of thy land.'"

IV.

The king thus answered: "Show a miracle,
If ye speak for the God of Israel.
We earthly kings our messengers invest
With royal tokens that the facts attest;
Your simple word no evidence supplies,
Prove what ye say before our royal eyes.

V.

"If Israel's God indeed is Lord of lords,
He should not send you here with empty words;
If at his mandate kings their wills should yield,
He nature must control in every field,
To change, suspend, or abrogate its laws,
Supreme o'er all, of each the primal cause.

VI.

"If ye can prove to me by miracle
That He, whom ye call God of Israel,
Is equal to the gods known to us here,
Whom Egypt worthily is taught to fear,
I to your message may attention give—
If not, by Egypt's gods, ye shall not live!"

VII.

His last words, uttered in an angry mood,
Drew all eyes on them as unmoved they stood
Before the king. Thus Aaron made reply:
"If we speak falsely then we ought to die;
And not unreasonable 's your demand
That God should show a wonder by our hand."

VIII.

He from the king now toward Moses turned,
Whose eyes, a moment raised, with lustre burned,
As if with heav'nly light they were illumed,
As he the chief place meekly here assumed,
And said, "My brother, in the name of God,
Before the king and court cast down the rod!"

IX.

Then Aaron backward moved some steps, to bring
More space between himself, the court and king,
The rod the while held in his outstretched hand
That they might thus a better view command,
Then cast it down, when, as it touched the floor,
To all the signs of life it plainly bore!

X.

With eyes of wonder, and with gaze intent,
The king and court watch the development,
As slowly, now, the rod before them cast
From lifeless wood to fleshly substance passed;
Then, fearful sight! transition's work complete,
A mighty serpent doth their presence greet.

XI.

In threatn'ing attitude, coiled fold on fold,
The horrid beast the king and court behold;
A painful awe succeeds their first alarm,
As if upon them worked its deadly charm,
And, filled with fear or speechless with amaze,
Their eyes seem motionless in their fixed gaze!

XII.

The king was first the reptile's charm to break,
As, rising from his ivory throne, he spake:
"Go, my attendants, and the wise men call;
Bid them come quickly to my audience-hall!
For by a test of powers we would know
If these by God supreme this wonder show."

XIII.

The royal summons instantly obeyed,
They soon appear—some in court-dress arrayed,
As if, expectant of the king's command,
They waited in the palace near at hand—
Two—Jannes, Jambres—with a stately tread,
The half-score lesser lights of magic led.

XIV.

On entering the presence of the king
They, bowing, to the floor their foreheads bring,
Then rise, and, at a motion of his hand,
Confronting Moses and his brother stand.
The serpent eyes them, and, now strange to tell!
Unwinds its coils as under some strange spell.

XV.

Ye hosts invisible, behold the sight!
And you look on, black spirits of the night!
Behold the two, Jehovah's ministers;
Behold the others, who are Lucifer's.
The first, by God in his own strength arrayed;
The last, by pow'rs infernal panoplied.

XVI.

Thus Pharaoh spake: "The serpent that ye see,
By some strange power these men caused to be.
A simple staff they hither with them bore,
Which changed to that, when cast upon the floor.
By this they claim that Israel's God has made,
And should, of right, by all things be obeyed."

XVII.

To this the wise man, Jannes, made reply:
"Great king of kings, their claim we here deny,
And if to serpents we now change our rods,
Not by their Lord but by great Egypt's gods,
Our miracle, as equal in repute,
Shall this their claim successfully refute.

XVIII.

"Armed with a power to resist we stand,
And wait a signal from your royal hand."
His pleasure signified, with much dumb show
Their wands before him on the floor they throw,
While Jambres says: "To serpents turn these rods,
Osiris, king, and Isis, queen of gods!"

XIX.

As if from either end together pressed,
The rods contracting power manifest;
Then, wondrous to behold! with life imbued,
They slowly turn into a serpent brood;
But tiny things, that seem half dead with fright,
And seek in vain a covert from the light.

XX.

The older serpent, breaking now the charm
That bound her for awhile, sees their alarm,
And to their rescue comes with mother-care,
Opes wide her mouth, and offers refuge there!
Her signal sound instinctively they heed,
Each wriggles in, and finds its nature's need.*

XXI.

Philosophy no plainer proof demands,
That they to serpents really changed their wands.
This seal of nature does the fact attest,
Though, overlooking this, some have expressed
A doubt, and some have sought to make-believe
That Egypt's wise men only did deceive.

XXII.

But nature's seal, admitted genuine,
Does a wide field for evil force define!
Yet circumscribed; not so extensive here,
No, not by far, as in its moral sphere.
A skill to change, no power to create,
But nature in some low forms imitate.

---

* The young reptile brood when frightened naturally take refuge in the stomach of the mother serpent, whose mouth is opened to admit and swallow them into this, their safest retreat from danger. Natural history thus sets its seal to the genuineness of the wonderful feat performed by Jannes and Jambres, through the power of "the prince of this world," which some Christian commentators, actuated by an honest, but mistaken, zeal for the honor of God, "which was not according to knowledge," have presumed to doubt or deny.

XXIII.

Here let a moral point our argument,
Which in our deeper thoughts has long been pent;
God give us grace to utter it aright,
That others now, as we, may see its light.
'T is this, in brief: Geology must own,
If Satan has changed rods he might change stone.

XXIV.

Soon as the last young reptile disappeared,
The Levite fearlessly the serpent neared
And caught it by the tail, when it once more
Changed to a rod, the same they hither bore!
Conflicting judgment king and court divides,
To keep the Hebrews, though, the king decides.

ARGUMENT OF CANTO X.

At the end of seven days God appears to Moses again and empowers him to work another wonder before the king of Egypt, and one of a kind which will fill all hearts with dismay. As directed by him, Moses and Aaron repair to the bank of the Nile, where they await the arrival of the king and his court, who are coming to pay religious honors to their sacred stream. Aaron, with the rod in his hand, confronts Pharaoh as he approaches in the lead of the royal retinue, and declares his message from God. The king, sharply rebuking them for daring to intercept his way, moves forward to the bank of the river. At a signal from his brother, Aaron lifts his rod over the stream and toward the four cardinal points of the compass over the land of Egypt. The water of the river is turned to blood, as also all water in ponds, pools, cisterns and vessels throughout the land. Pharaoh calls for the wise men and sorcerers of Egypt, who do a like wonder by their enchantments, turning water into blood. The heart of the king is hardened, and he refuses to let the Children of Israel go. The Canto closes with an application of the lesson to the present time, in its bearing upon the prevalent issue raised by modern infidelity against God and his Holy Word.

CANTO TENTH.

THE PLAGUE OF BLOOD—SECOND CONFLICT BETWEEN MOSES AND THE MAGICIANS.

I.

A WEEK has passed, to waiting hearts how long!
To such each hour its stay seems to prolong;
But careless souls skip lightly over time,
As if they stepped to some low wedding chime.
Thus, while all Egypt passed the week in glee,
To Israel the hours moved heavily.

II.

Again God spake to Moses, bidding him
Repair with Aaron to the river's brim,
And there await the coming of the king,
Who would his servants with him thither bring,
Before whom they should speak the words of God,
And turn the waters of the Nile to blood.

III.

At early dawn the brothers took their way
To where the king and court were wont to pay
Religious honors to the River Nile,
Where they await their coming for awhile;
Not long, for as the sun a full disk showed,
They moved in state along the distant road.

IV.

As they approached them, Pharaoh in the lead,
In concert low the brothers bowed the head;
An act of reverence due to their king,
Though they a message from their God did bring.
His path impeded, Pharaoh halted now,
And contemplated them with knitted brow.

V.

Thus Aaron spake to him: "The God we serve,
Who all things made, and does each life preserve,
Who bears so patiently with men perverse,
And blesses still, while he withholds the curse;
This God sends us his pleasure to convey,
If thou wilt hearken now to what we say.

VI.

"He bids us say, 'King Pharaoh, give command
That Jacob's children may go from thy land,
And, as I bid them, in the wilderness,
By sacrificial signs, my name confess,
Else, if thou still refuse, this lifted rod
Shall Egypt's streams and pools turn into blood.'"

VII.

Impatiently he waved them from his path,
While his dark eyes were kindled into wrath.
"How dare you, Moses, Aaron!" thus he spake,
"Your idle threat thus in my presence make?
How dare you my religious steps impede?
For this your backs do well deserve to bleed."

VIII.

Thus speaking, Pharaoh in an angry mood
Moved on till close beside the Nile he stood,
And stooping, in its sacred waters laved
The hand he Aaron from his path had waved.
Just at that moment Aaron with the rod
Smote on the stream, as bidden by his God.

IX.

O stroke omnipotent! from sea to source
The River Nile felt its compelling force;
Its sluggish current turned from dark to red,
For blood, not water, filled its mighty bed.
The very hand he lifted from the flood,
O horrid sight! was dripping now with blood.

X.

A moment overcome, he closed his eyes,
But in the darkness hideous sights would rise,
As if the spirits of the children slain,
In form of blood were coming back again;
Or as if that of every murdered man,
From Abel down, through luckless Egypt ran.

XI.

Nor on the king alone, but court as well,
The wonder with bewild'ring power fell;
Though of its vast extent they nothing knew,
Their knowledge bounded by the present view;
Above, below, the Nile might water yield,
As far as they could see it blood revealed.

XII.

Two of the royal retinue surveyed
The wonder with a spirit undismayed;
Themselves the agents of an unseen hand,
That could a wonder-working force command;
These, Jannes and his brother,* wise men called,
Upon the bloody stream gazed unappalled.

XIII.

These Pharaoh called, become now self-possessed,
And thus the elder of the two addressed:
"Can ye, great Jannes, skilled in magic art,
To simple water such a look impart?
Nor semblence only, be it here confessed,
But veritable blood these hands attest."

XIV.

To which thus Jannes, bowing, made reply:
"This sign miraculous none can deny,
But we, your majesty, will duplicate
This miracle, by one in kind as great,
That ye may know our gods of Egypt here
To none in wonder-working skill defer.

---

* According to tradition, these chief magicians or wise men, as they are called, were twin brothers. It is a singular coincidence that the two men on either side, Moses and Aaron, and Jannes and Jambres, who are the principal human actors or instruments in this great conflict between the powers of Light and of darkness, should have been in both cases brothers.

XV.

"If now your majesty will give command,
That water from some fountain near at hand
Be brought to us, we will our word make good
By turning it to veritable blood."
The king's attendants after search obtained
Some water from a well that pure remained.

XVI.

Now, turning to the monarch, Jannes said:
"He who can change one hair from black to red,
Could many change: so, of this water here,
Though small in bulk, to what doth there appear,
If by our gods we change it you must own
An equal wonder we in kind have shown."

XVII.

Across the vessel they their wands now laid,
As to their gods they thus in concert prayed:
"Ye gods of Egypt! princes, queens, give ear,
And in your own behalf by us appear;
Canopus, Lucifer, prince of the air,
Who over liquids can work changes rare!"

XVIII.

Their wands they raised, crossed, in the water tipped,
Then lifted them; when lo! with blood they dripped.
The wise man, Jannes, had his word made good,
And Moses, here again, resisted stood.
A murmur of applause the feat received
From king and court, whose minds were thus relieved.

XIX.

With ireful looks, and heart like adamant,
The king now turned and to his palace went.
God's law defied, the will to break it grows,
And strengthens when not broken by its blows;
Thus Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the Lord,
By that which, yielded to, does grace afford.

XX.

Behold the land of Egypt gorged with blood!
Her pools full of it—vessels, stone and wood;
Constrained to drink of blood to quench their thirst,
While digging wells to find the water first;
Cursed in the sacred Nile, their chief delight—
Was ever people in such woeful plight!

XXI.

The Plague of Blood men better understand,
Than what was wrought by wily Jambres' wand;
God, by his Holy Spirit, give us grace
This latter briefly in its depths to trace;
Assured that in its study we shall find,
Some facts worth lodging in the human mind.

XXII.

Men who seek deep for truth in nature's book,
Facts on the surface sometimes overlook;
As this, for instance: While no one denies
That in us a wide range of power lies,
They fail to see, or strangely circumscribe,
The skill of Satan and his fallen tribe.

XXIII.

If man at will earth's substances can change,
Shall Satan over matter have no range?
Prince of the air, shall he the whirlwind ply,
Yet over liquids men his pow'r deny?
If, with far-seeing wisdom, evil men
Pursue their aims, is he of feebler ken?

XXIV.

If the magicians wrought by Satan's hand,
And water turned to blood at their command,
Its muddy sediments, by him congealed,
A host of semblances of things might yield;
Where then your record, claimed infallible,*
Ye scientists, who are in league with hell?

---

*Professor Huxley, of England, in his lecture at Masonic Hall, Nashville, Tenn., in 1876, referring to their geological evidences of the creation of the world, and speaking for himself and his fellow-scientists, boastfully declared that "they had a record which could not be tampered with." An infidel might honestly believe so; but, in the face of revealed truth, the assertion is both untrue and pernicious.

ARGUMENT OF CANTO XI.

A GLANCE at Egypt under the curse of blood. The public distress, immediately in consequence of the want of water to drink, and more remotely because of the destruction of the fish, before so abundant in the streams, and upon which so many depended for food. Removal of the plague after seven days. God appears to Moses again. Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and announce the impending curse of frogs, if he longer refuses to obey the God of Israel. Having delivered their message to the king, and received his refusal to let the Children of Israel go, they proceed at once, passing through the principal street of Zoan, to the neighborhood of the Nile. Aaron lifts the rod over the river, and in a figure over all the ponds and streams in Egypt, and frogs come up by myriads from the waters, and cover the face of the earth. Entering at length the palace-grounds of the king, their presence announces to him the speedy and fearful fulfillment of the curse pronounced upon him by Moses a few hours previous. The magicians are called, and they bring up frogs by their enchantments. Dissatisfied with them, and overcome by the terrible scourge, Pharaoh sends for Moses and Aaron, and prays them to entreat the God of Israel, for him and for his land, that the Plague of Frogs may be removed, and promises to let the Children of Israel go. Moses, as if intoxicated with joy, gives way to an exultant exclamation, and asks the king to set the time for him to intercede and have the curse removed. Pharaoh puts it off until the morrow, perhaps hoping that the plague may cease of itself in the meantime, and that he may thus avoid the necessity of letting the people go. Moses prays to God for the land of Egypt, and the Plague of Frogs is removed. Pharaoh changes his mind, and, notwithstanding his solemn engagement to Moses, he retains the Israelites in bondage. The Canto closes with a view of the condition of Egypt immediately after the destruction of the frogs, particular attention being called to those piled up by the pool in the palace grounds of the king, and to the fact that they came into being as the result of opposite and opposing forces—the one through Divine and the other through satanic agency.

CANTO ELEVENTH.

THE PLAGUE OF FROGS—THIRD CONFLICT BETWEEN MOSES AND THE MAGICIANS.

I.

As if a thing of life this mighty globe,
And Egypt, upper, lower, each a lobe
Of its huge lungs, by some great rupture torn,
The Nile the throat through which its blood was borne,
So day by day the bloody current flowed,
To which each pool and stream its part bestowed.

II.

For seven days the blood in torrents run,
The plague then ceased, the evil not yet done;
The finny tribes, whose wholesome flesh supplied
Food for so many families, all died,
And stress of hunger followed stress of thirst
In many places in this land accursed.

III.

Again that Voice, that all the dead shall hear,
In stillness broke on Moses' wakeful ear.
God bade him to the king convey once more
The order he had thrice borne him before,
Commanding that, which, should he fail to do,
A Plague of Frogs should instantly ensue.

IV.

Their hearts with lively faith and courage warmed,
This order they with firmer steps performed;
While on his Hebrew serfs the king bestowed
Far more respect than hitherto he showed.
Taught by the Plague of Blood, the men he feared,
If not the God in whose name they appeared!

V.

"Great king, God bids you let his people go,"
Thus Aaron spake. "If not, he bids us show
A miracle more fearful than the last,
That Egypt with dismay shall overcast.
Your streams shall yield you frogs, instead of blood,
To cover you as with a living flood!"

VI.

To Aaron's speech the king deigned this reply,
In tones expressing wounded dignity;
He said: "Your prayer, in diff'rent style addressed,
Our royal clemency might now arrest,
But Egypt's kings, enthroned in their own land,
Can brook from none an order of command."

VII.

The interview thus closed, the two repair
With nervous steps through Zoan's thoroughfare,
Till near the Nile they stand, o'er which the rod
The Levite lifts, as ordered by their God.
Then, in a figure, over all the land
High waves the symbol in his outstretched hand.

VIII.

Now from the Nile frogs into being leap
In countless multitudes, piled heap on heap,
Where for awhile they in confusion lie,
Till age or hunger motive powers supply;
Then, like an army, they advance with speed,
And hapless he who does their way impede!

IX.

Crushed by the weight, or poisoned by their breath,
Who falls before them often meets with death.
The people from the leaping columns fly,
And Zoan's streets and lanes deserted lie.
The sight the hard heart of the king appalls,
And he for help on Egypt's wise men calls.

X.

These at the summons of the king appear,
And seek by words his sinking heart to cheer.
Thus Jannes spake: "Hear us, O king! we pray,
Nor doubt thy gods from what is seen to-day;
For they who for us water turned to blood,
Can for us call up frogs from yonder flood.

XI.

"Come thou with us unto the pool near by,
Which from the River Nile draws its supply,
And we by a like miracle will show
That Egypt's gods rule on this earth below."
And, followed by the king, they lead the way,
Magicians, senators, a grand array.

XII.

Arrived beside the pool, thus Jambres spoke:
"Thy aid, Osiris, we again invoke,
And thine, prince of the power of the air,
Who over wind and water rule doth bear."
Their rods they crossed, then turned them deftly round,
When from the pool, lo! frogs leaped on the ground.

XIII.

The king's attendants gave a feeble cheer,
For Egypt's heart was quaking now with fear,
And Pharaoh's smile less resolution bore,
Than when their wonders he approved before;
As if he would have had them try their skill
Not frogs to make, but all the frogs to kill!

XIV.

The chief magician saw his wav'ring mind,
And answer made him, wisely of its kind:
"What now the gods have done for us and you,
We may not rashly ask them to undo;
The life called into being has its day,
Or, if offensive, ye may rightly slay.

XV.

"Be this thy comfort, Goshen is not free
From croaking frogs, but suffers equally.
If he, whom they the God of Israel call,
As God omnipotent ruled over all,
Would he the Hebrews with their foes afflict?
Or would he not this plague to us restrict?"

XVI.

This argument a ready lodgment made,
And to the king a present balm conveyed.
Though frogs, in multitude, croaked at his gate,
He to his chamber now returned in state;
But not to rest, the frogs such tumult kept,
That few in Zoan or in Egypt slept.

XVII.

More fearful still, as if in stream and bog
The taint of blood had changed the harmless frog;
As if for human flesh or blood in quest,
They into houses, up to chambers pressed;
To keep them from their rooms the day employs,
And night is hideous with their dreadful noise.

XVIII.

Though Pharaoh's senators submission urged,
Six days have passed, and Egypt still is scourged.
The king, now yielding, bade his servants call
The Hebrews, Moses, Aaron, to his hall;
Who first for heav'nly guidance humbly prayed,
And then his summons speedily obeyed.

XIX.

As they approached, the king rose from his throne
And thus addressed them, in respectful tone:
"Entreat thy God, for me and mine, I pray,
That he may take this Plague of Frogs away!
And ye may go, according to his word,
And offer sacrifice and serve the Lord."

XX.

Inebriated by the mental draught,
Like Sarah, Moses in his heart now laughed,
While he aloud cried, "Glory over me!
When shall I thus entreat the Lord for thee?
Wilt thou that all the frogs be slain to-day,
Or suffered only in the streams to stay?"

XXI.

"To-morrow," in reply, said Egypt's king—
As if in hope the night relief might bring!
"So be it, then, according to thy word,
And thou shalt know there is none like the Lord,"
He answered him. "To-morrow thou wilt find
The living frogs within the streams confined."

XXII.

Their bosoms with great expectations fired,
The Levite and his brother now retired;
While Aaron from the palace homeward went,
And happy tidings throughout Goshen sent,
His brother goes with God to intercede,
And for the king, his house, and people plead.

XXIII.

God heard his prayer; that night the frogs were slain,
Or only in the streams and bogs remain.
The morrow saw the plague indeed removed,
But Pharaoh recreant to his promise proved;
For when he saw the land from frogs was free,
He kept God's people still in slavery.

XXIV.

In heaps the frogs lie piled on every hand,
Where they decay, defiling all the land;
And by the pool, in Pharaoh's palace-ground,
Two kind of frogs in the same heap are found;
One caused to be by the magician's wand,
The other coming forth at God's command.

ARGUMENT OF CANTO XII.

God appears to Moses again, and bids him direct Aaron to take the rod and smite with it upon the dust of the ground, that it may become lice in man and in beast throughout all the land of Egypt With no previous announcement of the curse to the king, who had so lately broken his solemn promise to them to release the Israelites on the removal of the Plague of Frogs, Moses and Aaron obey the command of God, and bring the Plague of Lice upon the land. The terrible distress of the Egyptians under this curse. The gods of Egypt are attacked by the vermin in their sacred emblems, Apis, Ibis and Mnevis. Pharaoh sends for Jannes and Jambres, who endeavor, as on previous occasions, to do the like by their enchantments, calling upon the gods of Egypt and of other lands; but having already reached the utmost limit of the satanic power of resistance in that direction, they fail in their effort to duplicate this miracle, and confess that it is the finger of God Almighty, which is working by the hand of Moses and his brother. Though Pharaoh is thus deserted by the magicians, those human instruments of the evil one, yet he hardens his heart and refuses to let the Children of Israel go, thus interposing his merely mortal arm in impious resistance to God. After a mere allusion to the remaining seven plagues of Egypt, the Canto closes with a brief review of the argument of the Poem, as it relates to the issue raised by the scientific school of modern infidel against the Word of God.

CANTO TWELFTH.

THE PLAGUE OF LICE—FOURTH CONFLICT BETWEEN MOSES AND THE MAGICIANS, AND TRIUMPH OF THE MAN OF GOD—CONCLUSION.

I.

A WEEK has passed since all the frogs were slain,
Or in the streams alone left to remain.
Though Jacob's children felt the plague quite sore,
'T was less oppressive than their tasks before;
And now from heaping frogs, their menial part,
They to their tasks returned with heavy heart.

II.

Far to the east the news began to spread,
And Philistia's heart was filled with dread;
While to the south the Ethiop' has heard
That Jacob's God in Egypt has appeared:
North, on the sea; west, where the desert lay,
By sail and caravan it found its way.

III.

Nor mortal eyes alone to Zoan turned,
And watched the issue, and were much concerned;
But angels, waiting by Jehovah's throne,
Took interest in things there being done;
And devils, loosed from their sulphur'ous deep,
Did now in Egypt midnight revels keep.

IV.

Remembering who the contestants were,
I wonder not such feelings centered there!
As representing the Almighty God,
There Moses stood, and Aaron, with the rod;
While, to resist them, Jannes and his band
Stood, armed each with a hell-empowered wand.

V.

Again God spake to Moses, not to say,
As heretofore, "Go to the king to-day;"
But, passing by his royal majesty,
He said: "Take thou thy brother now with thee,
And bid him with the rod smite on the ground,
That lice as dust in Egypt may abound."

VI.

They to the dusty highway now repair,
To work the miracle as ordered there;
The Levite lifts the rod and smites the dust,
And Egypt with the Plague of Lice is cursed!
As with the loathsome vermin now it teems,
A creeping thing of life the highway seems.

VII.

Nor only that whose dust the Levite smote,
But every highway, howsoe'er remote,
And every street, in cities great or small,
For lifeless dust does with the vermin crawl!
No place exempt—the walks in pleasure grounds,
As roads and streets, with the dread plague abounds.

VIII.

Though small the pest, the aggregate of ill
Does Egypt's smitten heart with terror fill;
For, of all unclean things, to them the worst
Is that with which their land is now accursed!
As one such insect would a priest defile,
All sacred rites perforce must cease awhile.

IX.

The temples of their gods in vain they close,
To shield their sacred emblems from these foes!
Apis, the ox in which Osiris dwells,
Now paws the floor as he with fury swells;
And Ibis, Isis's cow, lows in her stall,
As over her the hateful insects crawl.

X.

Three days the plague throughout the land has raged,
In slaying them, slaves, soldiers, all engaged.
Now in distress the king to Jannes sends,
Who, with his brother, to the palace wends
His painful way; for on their bodies crawl
Pestiferous lice, the common plague of all.

XI.

Thus Pharaoh to the chief magician spoke:
"Have ye, great Jannes, power to revoke
This pestilence? Or, if ye cannot take
The plague away, then have ye skill to make,
As Moses, lice from dust, that we may know
Our gods have equal power here below?"

XII.

This answer Jambres for his brother made:
"No need to call upon the gods for aid,
When, by your slaves and soldiers, ye can slay
The vermin and thus take the plague away;
But if we by our gods the thing repeat,
As heretofore, we Moses' claim defeat."

XIII.

An empty water-vase is filled with dust,
And into this their wands the wise men thrust,
As they invoke their gods: "Cause lice to crawl
Forth from this dust, Osiris, king of all,
And Isis, thou whom queen of gods we own!
As Tammuz and Astarte elsewhere known."

XIV.

No answer get they though aloud they call
On these and other gods, both great and small.
They beat themselves until with pain they groan,
In hope to move their gods of wood and stone;
But all in vain—the dust does dust remain,
Though long they wait, loud of their gods complain.

XV.

They Lucifer invoke, king of the day,
To Nox, queen of the night, vocif'rous pray;
On Memnon, Hermes, and on Horus call,
Whose white ox, Mnevis, bellows in his stall;
On Mendes, Moloch, Nisroch, Bel—in vain,
From god or beast no answer they obtain.

XVI.

As devils afterward the Saviour knew,
So now these wise men get a clearer view,
And say, as each takes from the vase his rod,
"This is the finger of Almighty God!
His chosen ministers these Hebrews are,
Whom to resist we will not longer dare."

XVII.

While in the realm of water they could vie,
And duplicates of serpents, frogs, supply;
A power still by fallen angels held,
When they, preceding man, from God rebelled;
But over dust, since man from it was made,
The chief of devils could give them no aid.

XVIII.

Turned from its proper course, the human soul
Nor pow'rs of darkness nor of light control!
Here must Omnipotence its skill employ,
As easier to create than to destroy.
Though devils dare not, man God disobeys;
Thus Phoraoh reasons, though he nothing says.

XIX.

As fitted now for wrath, God holds him up
Till Egypt quaffs in full her bitter cup;
Till seven more wonders by His hand are shown,
And Israel's God throughout the world is known;
Till to the sea his army Pharaoh leads
And the great maw of death insatiate feeds.

XX.

The thread of logic once more to present,
And so, in fine, complete the argument:
If, as the sacred oracles attest,
The fallen angels have such force expressed,
To Christian minds may not this truth profound
Account for some things gathered from the ground?

XXI.

The Christian man of learning here must own,
An evil hand thrice tampered with the stone!
Nor reptiles only in appearance made,
But life, as well as form, to them conveyed;
How easier far, to work his evil will,
The wat'ry depths with forms of things to fill?

XXII.

Let scientists who miracles deny,
The sacred record impiously decry;
Let Huxley, Darwin, Tyndal proudly boast
They sail along a plain, unbroken coast;
Yet, to the man who holy truth reveres,
Their boast as empty as their faith appears.

XXIII.

Shall Christian men the Word of God lay by
And have geology their light supply?
Or shall they vainly twist the truth about,
And leave the simple sense of Scripture out?
O no, this on your banners keep unfurled,
"Let God be true, but liar all the world!"

XXIV.

The end attained, thy blessing, Lord, I pray,
As on thy servant, on this work let stay,
That other Christian hearts like mine may burn
With brighter faith as from its page they turn;
And if of honor aught to me accrue,
In heav'n, not here, let me receive the due.

THE END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper proc
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:
JAN 199
BOOKKEEPE
PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES,
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111
NS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 005 820 737 8